

IOWA OUTDOORS

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

www.state.ia.us/government/dnr/index.html

Editor: Mick Klemesrud, 515/281-8653

mick.klemesrud@dnr.state.ia.us

Jan. 14, 2003

1. Mild Winter Results in Substantial Increase of Wintering Waterfowl – by Lowell Washburn
2. 7 Ice Fishing Clinics Scheduled
3. Outdoor Education Workshops Scheduled

[EDITOR S NOTE: There are photos available electronically for the waterfowl survey article by Lowell Washburn. Send your request to mick.klemesrud@dnr.state.ia.us]

MILD WINTER RESULTS IN SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE OF WINTERING WATERFOWL

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

CLEAR LAKE--On Wednesday, Jan. 8, wildlife biologists from across the nation conducted the annual North American census of wintering waterfowl. And although the results of last week's survey are still being tabulated, the 2003 winter count is certain to rank among the highest ever recorded, predicts DNR waterfowl biologist, Guy Zenner.

"For those of us living in the northern states, this was certainly an exceptional and very exciting year to be counting mid-winter waterfowl," said Zenner.

"For the second year in a row, we have tens of thousands more Canada geese wintering in the state than we have in past surveys. Extremely mild weather conditions have resulted in a significant increase in open water areas compared to past years, and food [waste grain] is virtually everywhere. For an unusually large number of ducks and geese, there was simply no reason to move farther down the Flyway. Minnesota is also holding large numbers of birds, and I suspect that they'll have excellent counts as well."

The National Mid-Winter Waterfowl Survey was established during the middle of the last century, and is one of the longest continuous wildlife counts coordinated by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The survey was originally established to inventory populations of arctic nesting snow, white-fronted, and Canada geese. Today, all species

of waterfowl are counted. Also included are the bald eagles which utilize wintering ducks and geese as a food source.

"In addition to just making a head count, the mid-winter survey has also become useful for monitoring changes in waterfowl distributions," said Zenner. "During the past 20 years, for example, we've seen some very large changes in where white-fronted, Canada, and snow geese choose to spend their winters. Because of unlimited food sources like waste corn, birds are able to spend the winter in areas that would have been impossible before. Having this information is an important component of sound resource management."

According to Zenner, wintering "farther north" could provide many tangible benefits for migrating waterfowl. As birds are exposed to less than normal hunting pressure, the hardier species such as mallard ducks and Canada geese enjoy a higher rate of survival. Due to a distinct lack of waterfowl at the southern end of the Mississippi Flyway, this year's hunting success remains poor in the traditional hotspot states of Mississippi, Arkansas and Louisiana. [Louisiana hunters traditionally harvest more ducks than hunters in the entire country of Canada.] As this year's season begins to wind down, Southern hunters are still looking north and asking, "Where are the ducks?".

But that's not all. Because many birds will only have to travel half the distance for the return trip to the spring breeding grounds, females will arrive in better condition, which should translate into increased production.

"This winter's mild temperatures and lack of snow cover has made it very easy for ducks and geese to remain in the north," said Zenner. "By simply flying to the nearest cornfield, birds are getting all the food they need. Instead of just maintaining, they're actually adding to their fat reserves every single day. Come spring, that will be very beneficial to this year's reproduction."

###

7 ICE FISHING CLINICS SCHEDULED

DES MOINES – There are 7 free ice fishing clinics scheduled around Iowa. Activities vary at each clinic, but participants can expect to learn basic safety tips while on the ice and different ice fishing techniques and bait presentations. Participants should prepare to be outdoors for an extended amount of time. Hats and mittens are essential along with a good pair of boots.

Contact the clinic for more information.

Jan. 25	McFarland Park Lake, Ames	515-232-2516
Jan. 25	Hannen Lake, Blairstown	319-472-5395
Jan. 26	Central Park Lake, Center Junction	563-487-3541
Feb. 1	Pinicon Ridge County Park, Central City	319-892-6485
Feb. 1	Lake Cornelia, Clarion	515-532-2579
Feb. 1	Easter Lake Park, Des Moines	515-323-5361
Feb. 8	Black Hawk Lake, Lake View	712-662-4530

###

OUTDOOR EDUCATION WORKSHOPS SCHEDULED

DES MOINES – The Iowa DNR is sponsoring workshops for K –12 educators, scout leaders and other youth educators on Iowa’s outdoors.

Workshops are scheduled for Jan. 23, from 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. at WIT/BV Educational Center, in LeMars; for Feb. 22, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Springbrook Conservation Education Center, near Guthrie Center; for April 5 and 12, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Heartland AEA, in Johnston; for April 9 and 10, from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the AEA 1, in Dubuque; and April 23 and 24, from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the AEA 1, in Elkader.

Educators will be introduced to several environmental activities through Project WILD, Aquatic WILD and Project Learning Tree. Participants will take home the manuals with Iowa supplements containing background information about Iowa’s resources and contact names.

“Participants need to dress for the weather and be prepared to do some activities outdoors, weather permitting,” said Barb Gigar, aquatic education coordinator for the DNR.

To register for the Jan. 23 workshop, contact Brian Nelsen at 712-722-4378 ext. 300, or by e-mail at bnelson@aea4.k12.ia.us. There is a \$15 fee for the Project Learning Tree materials. To register for the Feb. 22, 2003 workshop, contact Regina Lloyd at 641-747-2276 or by email at glloyd@iastate.edu. There is a \$10 registration fee and a \$15 cost for the Project Learning Tree materials.

To register for the April 5 and 12, 2003 workshop, contact Cindy Blobaum at 515-277-6110 or by e-mail at cindybb@juno.com. There is a \$15 cost for the Project Learning Tree materials. To register for the April 9 and 10 workshop, contact Dr. Marge Clark at 563-588-6309 or by e-mail at marge.clark@clarke.edu. There is a \$15 fee for the Project Learning Tree materials and graduate credit is available. To register for the April 23 and 24 workshop, contact Peg Christensen at 563-566-3310 ext. 623 or 1-800-942-

4668 or by e-mail at pchristensen@aeal.k12.ia.us. There is a \$15 fee for the Project Learning Tree materials and graduate credit is available.

Participants must register to attend the workshop. Information about the manuals is available on the DNR website. Go to fisheries and click on the education link.

For more information, contact Gigar at 641-747-2200.

###